

Toxinformer

Environmental Health Coalition

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION

Fighting Toxic Pollution
Protecting Public Health
Promoting Environmental Justice
1980-2005

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EHC

Organizing for Justice

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION is dedicated to environmental and social justice. We believe that justice is achieved when empowered communities act together to make social change. We organize and advocate to protect public health and the environment threatened by toxic pollution. EHC supports efforts that create a just society which foster a healthy and sustainable quality of life.



THE BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGN works to reduce toxic pollution caused by maquiladora industries in Tijuana and to promote fair trade and globalization for justice



THE CLEAN BAY TOXIC FREE CAMPAIGN works to cleanup, restore and protect San Diego Bay and bay tidelands from industrial and Naval polluters and development activities



THE TOXIC FREE NEIGHBORHOODS CAMPAIGN organizes in communities of color to advocate for the prevention of toxic pollution from industrial and mobile sources.



THE CAMPAIGN TO ELIMINATE CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING works to eliminate sources of lead exposure to protect children's health.

STAY INFORMED!

Become a member of EHC today!

Yes, I want to become a member of EHC. I am enclosing my tax-deductible membership contribution of:

- \$15 Students and Seniors \$100 Super Supporter
 \$25 Individual \$250 Toxic Avenger
 \$40 Booster \$_____ Other

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (W) _____ (H) _____

Email: _____ @ _____

Check enclosed Please charge my Visa Mastercard

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www.environmentalhealth.org

Old Town National City at a Crossroads

Environmental Health Coalition has been active in National City since the early 1980s. From responding to toxic emergencies to demanding that polluters comply with the law, from protecting watersheds to preventing childhood lead poisoning, EHC's goal has always been to make positive change – and to make it permanent. Since the beginning we realized that to accomplish real changes, there is a need for community-led planning.

National City is the second oldest city in San Diego County, and one of the poorest. Incorporated on September 17, 1887, National City was originally part of the 26,000-acre El Rancho de la Nacion, which was purchased in 1868 by Frank Kimball and his brothers Warren and Levi. They cleared lands, built roads, constructed the City's first wharf and brought the railroad to the City. It is

bordered by the City of San Diego on the north and east, Chula Vista on the south, and San Diego Bay on the west.

THE OLD TOWN SPECIFIC PLAN

The City of National City has hired a consul-

tant, EDAW, to lead the process of developing a Specific Plan for Old Town. This is a set of guidelines for development for a 10 to 15 year period, and both the City's planners and developers will look to this plan for direction in making any

proposals for future development. The area considered by the Old Town Specific Plan is bordered on the south by Mile of Cars Way, on the west by Interstate 5, on the north by Civic Center Drive and on the east by National City Blvd.

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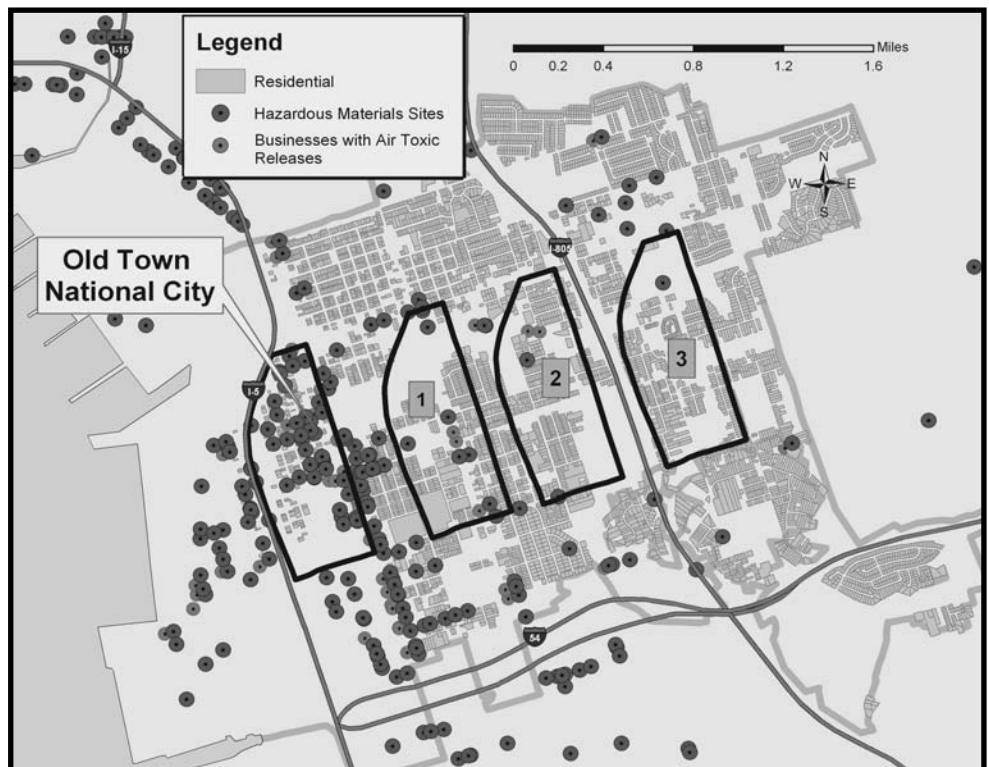


Figure 1. Toxic Air Releases for Old Town National City and Three 'Footprints' in National City

The community has engaged in the Specific Plan process in hopes that it will be a means to cleaning up and improving their neighborhood. However, after seven months of receiving input from residents, draft principles presented at a meeting in late August failed to reflect the community's core priorities for the Specific Plan. EHC is working with Old Town residents to ensure that the community planning process remains a tool for true community improvement and not a trojan horse for out-of-town developers search-

ing for opportunities to make a profit.

WHY DO WE NEED A SPECIFIC PLAN IN OLD TOWN?

The Old Town neighborhood is next to San Diego Bay and, as is the case in adjacent Barrio Logan, is an area with incompatible mixed use zoning.

EHC's research on Old Town's air toxic inventory paints a picture of the severity of the incompatible mixed-use issue. There are over 20 autobody shops in this six-by-fifteen block neighborhood, each of which emits multiple air-borne chemicals. While

many businesses operate without proper permits, EHC inspected the records of those businesses carrying appropriate Hazardous Materials and Air permits. The chemicals that are reported as part of the permit process have been linked to diseases such as asthma, cancer, and reproductive illness. EHC found that Old Town's air toxic inventory is disproportionately high for National City, as well as for the county as a whole. *Figure 1 (page 3)* shows the comparison: the 'footprint' around the Old Town neighborhood contains over 23,000 pounds of air toxics, while foot-

prints 1, 2, and 3 contain 6,000, 3,500, and 0 pounds of air toxics, respectively. About 70% of the reported toxics in Old Town come from autobody shops. The neighborhood also borders I-5 on the West, and is home to a diesel bus station, each of which is a source of high levels of particulate matter from motor vehicle emissions not included in these statistics.

The concern over this air pollution is fueled by the high asthma rate in the area. In 2004, Dr. Cindy Waters, former principal

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Reclaiming Old Town National City: A Community Survey

Old Town National City—once a residential neighborhood—has for decades been treated by planners as a dumping ground for polluting industry and warehouses. In recent years, however, the community, supported by a new, more receptive, City Council, has demanded that Old Town be respected as a residential

neighborhood. One of the key steps being taken to successfully return the neighborhood to residents is the design of a Specific Plan, which will lay out guidelines for development over the next 10 to 15 years. Community-based organizations working in Old Town have made the Specific Plan a central priority,

and have worked to engage residents in the discussions and debates around pertinent issues. In Spring/Summer 2005, Environmental Health Coalition conducted a community survey to gauge the neighborhood's opinion on key questions and priorities for the Specific Plan. The survey responses reveal the

community's preference on several important matters, including how to diminish the toxic air pollution in the area, redevelopment priorities, and how best to preserve the neighborhood's character. Below are key findings which are further detailed in the report, available at www.environmentalhealth.org



Community leaders Rosa Morales and Maria Coronel conducting surveys in Old Town

Key Findings:

- **14% of children in Old Town have diagnosed asthma—twice California's average!**
- **92% of respondents favor the construction of an autobody park for relocation of autobody shops out of the neighborhood to an industrial zone.**
- **The community's top three priorities for the Specific Plan are: Construction of new housing affordable to current Old Town residents, re-location of autobody shops, and changing the zoning in Old Town to residential and residential-compatible land uses.**

at Old Town’s Kimball Elementary, testified to the City Council that Kimball’s student body was experiencing a drastic increase in diagnosed asthma. While her testimony sparked a response from the Council—namely the formation of the National City Asthma Committee—both pollution and

asthma levels in the neighborhood remain elevated. Reacting to these issues by returning Old Town to a healthy residential neighborhood is a clear priority for respondents of EHC’s community survey. The graph in Figure 2 shows the priorities for their neighborhood.

EHC’s efforts to reduce environmental health risks by empowering residents to participate in revitalizing their community are funded by a very generous grant from The California Endowment.

The California Endowment’s mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians

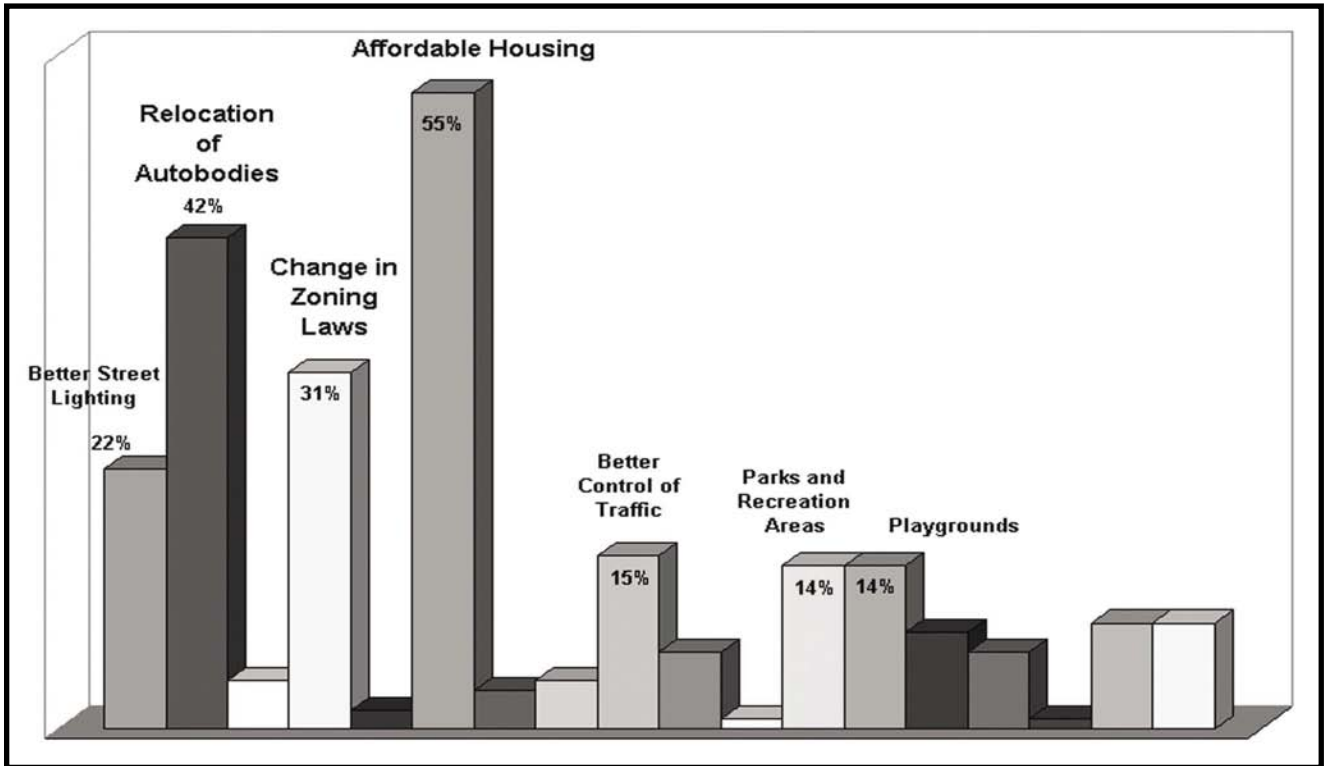


Figure 2. Priorities for the Old Town Specific Plan. As reported by community residents in EHC’s community survey

THE NATIONAL CITY ASTHMA COMMITTEE

After years of backwards planning that created a myriad of toxic problems, the community has made the link between the air pollution and the health problems they are suffering. For over a year, EHC has been an active member of the National City Asthma Committee. The committee is charged with increasing

asthma education among community residents, schools, and churches; making recommendations on how land use planning can improve environmental health; increasing and coordinating resources and data collection; monitoring pollution sources and enforcing changes to city policies and codes. This

committee, part of the city’s Building & Safety Department, is made up of city council members, city agencies, community residents, and community organizations that include faith-based organizations as well as members from Kimball Elementary School and Paradise Valley Hospital.

It is Co-Chaired by Council member Louie Natividad and Councilmember Frank Parra. The Asthma Committee has been recognized by the U.S. EPA as a model for a grassroots approach to improving the environmental health of a neighborhood.

The People are Doing it for Themselves

National City Residents Training for a New Dawn

The room was packed; the graduation ceremony was about to begin. On the faces of the 18 graduates you could see happiness and pride of accomplishment. Then, it was time for the celebration: food, cake, music, and laughter. Many brought their families to share in their joy. And a party was just what they needed after eight weeks of intensive training.

As with most graduates, these residents from National City were preparing to take part in a bigger project, one that will benefit their entire city.

Community Planning for Environmental Health is the latest in EHC's leadership training series known as SALTA, Salud Ambiental, Latinas Tomando Acción (Environmental Health, Latinas Taking Action). Designed to prepare residents to participate effectively in the Old Town National City community planning process, the sessions helped participants recognize their ability and gain confidence to be a community leader and to better understand their neighborhood. Topics included a community toxics inventory, health related topics such as asthma and

childhood lead poisoning, redevelopment, land use, affordable housing, eminent domain, and how to conduct a community survey. But most importantly, the training prepared them to take ownership of the future of their neighborhood.

This SALTA training has given these leaders the necessary tools to start making change in their neighborhoods.

WHY GO THROUGH THE TRAINING?

The reason why these residents went through this training is simple: they want a better community!

Margarita Garcia, one of the graduates, explains: "I have lived in this community for many years. I like to be involved in the fight for changes. I know that little by little, together we are going to clean our community's environment so that we all can breathe cleaner air and so that our children no longer suffer from asthma."

Tony LoPresti, policy advocate for EHC explains: "It's clear that people are forced to breathe poison here everyday—but we know that improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods is about more than addressing the environmental health issues. As an environmental justice organization, EHC is committed to working with the Old Town National City community to make progress on a range of key issues."



The leaders who have graduated from this program are: (in alphabetical order, not all present in photo) Adriana Alfaro, Elva Caravantes., Lorena Chavez, Maria Coronel, Martha Cortez, Lilia Damian, Argelia Estrada, Rosalba Farias, Lorena Gallegos, Margarita Garcia, Carmen Gutierrez, Florida Lozoya, Rosa Morales, Lucina Muñoz, Maria Radilla, Maria Robles, Irma Tranquilino and Angelica Villa

Progress requires broad-based support, and EHC leaders are working in collaboration with other local organizations such as Paradise Valley Hospital, the Old Town Neighborhood Council, Kimball Elementary School, and San Diego Organizing Project's St. Anthony's Organizing Ministry, the Family Resource Center, as well as with National City's Building & Safety Department.

EHC Building a Tidal Wave of Support for Cleanup of Toxic Sediments

A sea of supporters wearing blue EHC t-shirts flooded the Regional Water Quality Control Board hearing on June 29, 2005 to demand quick action to cleanup toxic sediments in San Diego Bay. At issue was the fate of the Cleanup and Abatement Order for large contaminated area near the Southwest Marine and NASSCO shipyards in San Diego Bay. The Regional Board was considering how to respond to polluter's requests to delay a planned workshop and hearing on the cleanup order. As polluter attorneys argued for more delay and less action and communities spoke out for protective cleanup to restore the Bay to health, the hearing became a classic showdown between corporate greed and the demand for environmental justice.

A RISING TIDE OF COMMUNITY VOICES DEMAND A CLEAN BAY

EHC organizers, members, and allies presented overwhelming support for quick and aggressive cleanup action. Flanked

by over 40 supporters, EHC community organizer Sonia Rodríguez presented 690 signed postcards to the Board members at the hearing stating, "I am here delivering the message from hundreds of residents who are asking you to schedule the hearing for the cleanup of the Bay, NOW".

Fishers and fishing organizations also demonstrated their strong support for protection of

the Bay's ecosystem. San Diego Fly fishers Club, Catch-22, and a sport fishing vessel, the Royal Polaris all weighed in favor of a safe and abundant fishery in San Diego Bay.

Local elected officials also demonstrated their concern for the health of residents. Congressman Bob Filner and Chula Vista Mayor Stephen Padilla who is also a Coastal Commissioner wrote urging

support for protective and timely cleanup of the Bay. The City of National City passed a unanimous resolution sending the strongest message to the Board that residents of National City deserve protection and full use and access to a clean and healthy San Diego Bay. Letters were also submitted by the Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) and the Council of Philippine American Organization (COPAO.)

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Outside the offices of the Regional Board, supporters gather before the June 29th hearing

THE TIDE RECEDED, TEMPORARILY

But, not everyone at the hearing favored immediate action. Attorney's for NASSCO fought aggressively to delay the process and frustrate the attempts of the Board to hold a meaningful workshop on the issue. Unfortunately, the Board capitulated to the polluters' demands and decided not to attend the sediment workshop that was scheduled to follow the hearing. Georgette Gomez, EHC community organizer, expressed her frustration at more inaction. She stated, "The people most at-risk from the pollution also live in the communities with the highest toxic exposures. The longer the Board delays this cleanup the more damage is done to our health. We are tired of waiting for justice!" In protest, EHC, the Bay Council and all of the supporters walked out from the rest of the scheduled proceedings and boycotted the workshop.

HOW LONG WILL JUSTICE TAKE?

The intent of the Regional Board appears to be clear: The board will adopt a clean up order and the shipyards will clean up the contaminated sediments. The Board staff has proposed a rigorous set of procedures for a hearing process that can be expected to take several months to complete. EHC supports these continued



Supporters as they walk out of the Regional Board chambers, boycotting the scheduled workshop

actions and views them as a sign that the Regional Board intends to defend their decision through the courts. EHC and the members of the Bay Council will be there with them defending a Clean Bay and the people who depend on it.

As the tide rises and falls, EHC will be there every time building support for clean San Diego Bay that is safely swimmable and fishable.

EHC initiated the Clean Bay Campaign in 1987 in response to findings of significant contamination in the sediments in San Diego Bay. In 1991, the Regional Board first requested action from NASSCO and Southwest Marine related to their toxic sediment problem. Fast forward to

2005 and still no action. In March, EHC released a report on pier fishers in San Diego Bay. The community-based survey found that of the 109 fishers surveyed, 96% were people of color, primarily Latino and Filipino. Over half of the fishers fished weekly and a quarter fish daily. Almost two thirds of the fishers eat their catch and 80% of the surveyed fishers live in communities that also have the highest lead hazards in housing stock, highest cancer, reproductive, respiratory risks from air contaminants, and high poverty rates.

Sign up to receive EHC's e-mail alerts at:
www.environmentalhealth.org

“The longer the Board delays this cleanup, the more damage is done to our health. We are tired of waiting for justice!”

CAFTA Passes by Razor-Thin Margin

*Congresswoman Susan Davis Announces
Opposition on Eve of Vote*

July 28th began as a day of celebration for Environmental Health Coalition's San Diego Fair Trade Coalition (SDFTC), when Congresswoman Susan Davis personally phoned to announce that she would vote no on the Central American Free Trade Agreement, known as CAFTA, "because what really matters is the way we treat people."

Years of hard work and dedication by EHC's SDFTC—including organizing rallies, a Tijuana reality tour with Congresswoman Davis, sign-on letters, media outreach and over 250,000 signatures opposing CAFTA succeeded in earning her opposition.

"I am glad that Congresswoman Davis, after seeing firsthand the devastating environmental and social injustice in my community and after hearing from workers and their families, decided to oppose CAFTA," said Lourdes Luján from EHC's affiliate, the Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental.

Davis was part of a small group of four Congressional swing votes from California that have been the target of



the SDFTC. All voted against CAFTA.

But the same could not be said for the rest of the US House of Representatives, or at least 217 of them. In the wee hours of July 28th, the U.S. Congress passed CAFTA by a margin of only two votes, signaling a victory for the U.S. and corporate trade agenda.

Opposition to CAFTA was so strong that it required some last minute procedural stunts that included heavy corporate and administration lobbying, a rare presidential visit on the day of the vote and heavy-

handed wheeling and dealing on the house floor after the fifteen minute voting period was technically over.

"Defeating trade agreements like CAFTA and the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is important to San Diego and Tijuana," asserted Amelia Simpson, Director of EHC's Border Environmental Justice Campaign. "That's why one quarter million concerned citizens locally have registered their opposition to CAFTA and the FTAA. That's why San Diego and Tijuana's leading labor, environmental and social justice, migrants', women's and human rights organizations and the faith community also oppose North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)-style agreements."

The SDFTC was inaugurated in the fall of 2004, shortly after Congressman Bob Filner, Lourdes Luján from EHC's affiliate the Colectivo Chilpancingo Pro Justicia Ambiental, Carmen Valadez of the Colectiva Feminista Binacional and Jerry Butkiewicz of the San Diego/Imperial Counties Labor Council, joined EHC at the release of "Globalization at the Crossroads: Ten Years of NAFTA in the San Diego/Tijuana Border Region" (available at www.environmentalhealth.org.) This report documents the local impacts of the 1994 NAFTA agreement and demonstrates its failure to protect labor rights, health or the environment. NAFTA is the model for CAFTA, which expands corporate globalization's free trade mechanism to six countries—the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

SDFTC

San Diego Fair Trade Coalition members: Activist San Diego, Affordable Housing Coalition, American Friends Service Committee, Center on Policy Initiatives, Colectiva Feminista Binacional, Democratic Socialists of America, Environmental Health Coalition, Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers DL 725-LL1125, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 569, North County Coalition for Peace and Justice, Raza Rights Coalition, San Diego Baykeeper,

San Diego-Imperial Counties Labor Council, San Diego Maquiladora Workers Solidarity Network, San Diego Peace and Freedom Party, San Diego Secular Jews for Peace and Justice, Sierra Club, Students for Economic Justice, UNITE HERE Local 30, and San Diego WTO Alert .

For more information on the San Diego Fair Trade Coalition, contact Jorge Osuna at Environmental Health Coalition, 619.474.0220, ext 118, JorgeO@environmentalhealth.org



Leticia Ayala Receives the 10News Leadership Award

EHC is Proud to Congratulate Leticia Ayala for Receiving this Award from one of the Leading News Organizations in San Diego. Bravo Leticia!

On July 13th Leticia Ayala was awarded the 10News Leadership Award from KGTV Channel 10. Accompanied by her parents, coworkers, friends and members of the community, Channel 10 recognized her tireless efforts to solve the problem of childhood lead poisoning.

Leticia has been an EHC staff member for more than 10 years. She is the Director of the Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning (CeCLP). "The people that work with her, respect Leticia because she's a caring person and because she works really hard at what she does; and that is

why she is also respected throughout the country as a leader in the fight against childhood lead poisoning," said Luz Palomino.

In true form of a leader Leticia shared this accolade with her teammates. "This is a team effort and I could not have done it without you," she said while recognizing her teammates, Luz Palomino, Yeni Linqui, and Tony LoPresti. They work together to help the communities of Barrio Logan, Sherman Heights, Logan Heights and National City to better their living environment.

Yeni Linqui describes Leticia like this: "Her

candor and passion for the cause are very contagious and makes it easier to fight along side her everyday."

Diane Takvorian, Executive Director of EHC summed up the feelings of the organization by saying: "No one is more deserving of such an award. Under her leadership, the Campaign to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning has developed effective programs in San Diego and National City to get lead out of homes, has introduced the Children's Right to Lead-Safe Housing Ordinance in San Diego, and has worked with state legislators to eliminate lead in candies."

"I love what I do and I do what I love. I am very fortunate and happy to be part of the environmental justice movement. Si Se Puede!"

CeCLP has worked hard to develop and advocate for the Children's Right to Lead-Safe Housing Ordinance in the City of San Diego. The ordinance will result in a preventive and proactive strategy to make all pre-1978 housing lead-safe before 2010. In August, 2004, the Land Use and Housing Committee of the San Diego City Council unanimously approved this proposed ordinance. The measure will be heard by the full City Council soon. Sign up to receive EHC's email updates on the date of the ordinance at our website. www.environmentalhealth.org

California EPA Officials Take San Diego EJ Tour

EHC and Allies Work Together for Justice

“All politics is local” said Tip O’Neill, former Speaker of the House. The same can be said of pollution that impacts the health of community residents and our local waterways and air quality. All solutions, however, are not local. Much of the protection of the public’s health and the environment is controlled by the California Legislature and state agencies.

On May 23rd, the California Environmental Justice Working Group (EJWG) hosted the second Environmental Justice Community Assessment and Tour in San Diego for the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) Secretary and representatives of the CalEPA Departments. The purpose of the tour was to provide an overview of the environmental health and justice challenges in San Diego/Tijuana EJ communities and most importantly, to present community solutions and actions required to restore public health and environmental quality.

Founded 3 years ago, the EJWG is an alliance of six environmental justice organizations with strong community bases in distinct regions of California. From the urban areas of the San Francisco Bay Area to the sprawling region of Los Angeles; the trans-border region of San Diego/Tijuana; and the rural/suburban areas of the Inland Valleys of Riverside and San Bernardino in southern California. These regions include the diverse faces of the EJ movement in California—the poor, working-class, immigrant, refugee and communities of color that bear a disproportionate burden of

economic, environmental, public health and social impacts in the places they live, work, play, pray and go to school.

Over the past 20 years, our organizations have worked together in various state, regional and national coalitions that have resulted in critical accomplishments such as hazardous waste site clean up; worker and community right-to-know laws; air toxics regulations and local land use and zoning successes

SECRETARY LLOYD

After serving for five years as the Chairman of the California Air Re-

sources Board (ARB), CalEPA Secretary Alan Lloyd was appointed to his new post in December 2004. While at the ARB, Lloyd championed environmental justice issues and was particularly sensitive to the problems with incompatible land use. Recently released, the landmark Air Quality and Land Use Handbook was initiated by Lloyd and it recommends that pollution sources and sensitive uses like homes and schools be separated by appropriate distances, a concept that EHC has been promoting for nearly two decades.

Secretary Lloyd agreed to visit environmental justice communities throughout California to ensure that CalEPA meets its mandate of ensuring environmental quality for all Californians. “Environmental Health Coalition continues to make a difference for the people living in the San Diego/Tijuana region. The tour demonstrated the challenges before us to ensure clean air, water and quality of life for everyone and Cal/EPA is committed in its efforts to achieve our common goal,” said Lloyd after the tour.

The key issues discussed during the tour are illustrated on the map in the center of this issue of the Toxinformer.



Secretary Lloyd and CalEPA representatives at a pier in San Diego Bay. The Bay has been characterized as one of the most polluted in the nation